

VZCZCXRO6054
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHGI RUEHJS RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHTA #1671/01 2490912
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 050912Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3186
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 001671

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN AND IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KZ](#)
SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN - COMMON WORLD FORUM DRAFT COMMUNIQUE
NOW MUCH CLOSER TO USG VISION

REF: A. STATE 91869 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. ASTANA 1573 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. STATE 90355 (NOTAL)

ASTANA 00001671 001.2 OF 002

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The Ambassador participated in the Common World Forum senior officials meeting (SOM), which was held in Astana during August 28-29. The majority of European countries were represented by their embassies in Kazakhstan and most of the Muslim countries by senior-level MFA officials from their capitals. At the opening of the SOM, the Kazakhstanis circulated a new draft for the Forum's "Astana Declaration" that was much more in line with the USG's vision. We worked during SOM discussions with the Europeans to delete or amend the remaining problematic points. The resultant new text has two bracketed points -- one on the Alliance of Civilizations and a second on women's rights -- that must be agreed to by October 10, in advance of the October 17 Common World Forum ministerial. We raised the question of broadening participation for the ministerial; the Kazakhstanis took this point under consideration. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The senior officials meeting (SOM) of the Common World Forum -- an initiative of President Nazarbayev aimed at promoting dialogue between the West and the Muslim world -- was held in Astana during August 28-29. The Ambassador participated in sessions on the first day. The SOM was attended by representatives from forty-five Western and Muslim countries, including Iran, as well as delegates from the Organization of Islamic States (OIC) and the Alliance of Civilizations (AOC). Level of representation varied from country to country. Brazil and the majority of the European countries were represented by their embassies in Kazakhstan. However, Turkey, Belgium, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Finland, Slovakia, and Hungary sent director-level MFA representatives from capitals. (Note: Cyprus and Finland do not maintain embassies in Kazakhstan. End Note.) Spain sent its ambassador-at-large for Alliance of Civilizations issues. Russia and most of the Muslim countries were represented by higher-level (i.e., director-general and above) MFA officials from capitals.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Both days of the SOM were devoted to discussing the so-called "Astana Declaration" -- the outcome document for the October 17 Common World Forum ministerial meeting. At the beginning of the SOM, the Kazakhstanis circulated a new text for this communique, and the participants quickly decided to forgo the SOM program to try to finalize the language. The new version was worded in more general terms than the one circulated before the SOM, and incorporated many of the points we had raised with the MFA previously (see ref B). For example, the text no longer committed states to support the "defamation of religion" concept, to acknowledge

governments as "democratic" regardless of their practices, or to provide preferential debt relief to Islamic countries. (Note: The OIC representative registered his objection to deleting the reference to debt relief, but agreed to proceed with the discussions. End Note.) The new draft nevertheless still contained several points unacceptable to the U.S. -- such as support for restrictions on the media, as well as support for an International Convention on Religious Tolerance. We thus worked in concert with the Europeans (in particular, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) to successfully amend or delete these provisions.

14. (SBU) The resultant text that came out of the SOM (which was forwarded to the Department by email) is much more in line with the USG's vision, as outlined in ref A. While we succeeded in reaching agreement on most issues, two points remained bracketed at the end of the SOM: one regarding the Alliance of Civilizations and a second concerning women's rights. The Alliance of Civilizations point was inserted by the Turkish representative and "call(s) upon members of the international community to participate in, and contribute to the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations." Noting the USG position on the Alliance, we counter-proposed a text that would "endorse future meetings like this" and not single out particular initiatives, but the Spanish and Turkish delegations insisted on language specifically endorsing the AOC. A possible compromise text reads that "(we the ministers) welcome the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations," with no mention of support or participation.

15. (SBU) Disagreement also remained on a point on women's rights to emancipation and development. Iran's delegation asked to augment the text to say "development in accordance with national, cultural, and social norms." Their suggestion was met with objections from many of the participants,

ASTANA 00001671 002.2 OF 002

including Poland, Macedonia, and Brazil. Several of the European representatives and Qatar proposed alternative formulations as a compromise. Nevertheless, Iran refused to withdraw the point. It was agreed to continue working on the communique text until October 10, the deadline proposed by the Kazakhstanis for finalizing it in advance of the October 17 Common World Forum Ministerial.

16. (SBU) We also raised the issue about broadening participation in the Common World Forum. Brazil, which had repeatedly raised the question of South American participation, and Russia, supported us. The Kazakhstanis said they would take this under consideration.

17. (SBU) Comment: As the Kazakhstanis made clear to SCA Assistant Secretary Boucher during his September 2 visit to Astana, they very much want high-level USG attendance at the October 17 ministerial. This should provide significant leverage in getting the Kazakhstanis to work with us on further changes that we want incorporated into the communique by October. Post also recommends working with Ankara and Madrid directly to find an acceptable compromise on language concerning the Alliance of Civilizations. Based on the atmospherics at the SOM, we do not believe that Muslim countries or the OIC will mount an attempt to reinsert problematic issues into the text between now and the ministerial. End Comment.
ORDWAY